

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5890
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY KIGALI
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 0039

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SK, BY, RW
SUBJECT: SOUTH KOREAN APPROACH TO BURUNDI

REF: BUJUMBURA 016 (NOTAL)

1. ON REVIEWING REFTEL FOLLOWING MY RETURN TO POST, I CONCUR THAT SOUTH KOREANS CHOSE WRONG TACTIC IN SEEKING A VISA OUT OF THE BLUE FROM BURUNDI EMBASSY IN KINSHASA FOR A VISIT TO BURUNDI BY THEIR AMBASSADOR TO ZAIRE. NOT ONLY HAS BURUNDI EMBASSY IN KINSHASA SHOWED ITSELF IN PAST TO BE VERY STICKY ON VISA QUESTIONS, BUT EVEN IF IT FORWARDED SUCH A REQUEST TO BUJUMBURA, OFFICIALS HERE WOULD BE QUITE HESITANT TO AUTHORIZE A SOUTH KOREAN OFFICIAL'S VISIT HERE BEFORE THE BURUNDI GOVERNMENT HAD ANY INKLING OF WHAT TO EXPECT. AFTER ALL, SUCH A VISIT WOULD CERTAINLY BECOME KNOWN HERE, AND IF THE INITIATIVE TURNED OUT TO LEAD NOWHERE, BURUNDI WOULD HAVE JEOPARDIZED ITS IMAGE AND ITS LINKS WITH PYONGYANG FOR NOTHING.

2. THUS, AS REFTEL SUGGESTED, AND AS WE URGED IN PARA 2 OF
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76 BUJUMBURA 1003 (NOTAL), PROPER SOUTH KOREAN TACTIC SHOULD BE TO OPEN DIALOGUE WITH BURUNDI OFFICIAL IN SOME FOREIGN CAPITAL. ONLY IF THE SOUTH KOREANS MADE AN ENTICING PITCH TO BURUNDI WOULD BE EXPECT THE LOCUS OF THE DIALOGUE AT SOME POINT TO SHIFT TO BUJUMBURA. AS KIGALI 08 NOTED, THE PITCH WOULD HAVE TO INCLUDE EVIDENCE OF A SERIOUS INTENTION TO PROVIDE SOME TANGIBLE AID HERE. (WE HAVE IN PAST SUGGESTED A SMALL FISH CANNERY AS ONE

POSSIBLE PROJECT.) AT SOME POINT AFTER THE DIALOGUE HAD STARTED, I WOULD BE WILLING TO WEIGH IN WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO ENCOURAGE A POSITIVE RESPONSE, AS PART OF THE OVERALL EFFORT TO NUDGE BURUNDI TOWARD MORE TRULY NON-ALIGNED POSITIONS.

3. I WOULD HOPE THAT THE SOUTH KOREAN'S NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE IN KINSHASA WILL NOT DISCOURAGE THEM AND CAUSE A LOSS OF MOMENTUM IN THEIR EFFORTS. FOR THAT REASON, I WOULD ADVISE THEM NOT TO WAIT UNTIL NEW BURUNDI AMBASSADORS ARE INSTALLED IN PARIS OR BRUSSELS, BUT TO MAKE A CAREFUL PITCH WITH NZEYIMANA IN WASHINGTON OR WITH NDABAKWAJE IN BONN. REFTEL (PARA TWO) CAST DOUBT ON NZEYIMANA'S WILLINGNESS TO RAISE WITH BUJUMBURA THOSE ISSUES WHICH MIGHT BE SENSITIVE WITH REGIME. WHILE THAT MAY HAVE BEEN THE CASE WITH THE PROBLEM OF SIMBANANIYE'S APPOINTMENT TO THE UN, WHICH CONCERNED INTERNAL BURUNDI POLITICS, I DO NOT REPT NOT THINK NZEYIMANA WOULD HESITATE TO SEND FAIRLY STRAIGHTFORWARD ACCOUNT TO BUJUMBURA OF ANY CONVERSATION WITH A SOUTH KOREAN. IN FACT, HIS DIPLOMATIC SAVVY WOULD MAKE HIM A GOOD INTERLOCUTOR. I SUGGEST THE AMBASSADOR TO BONN ONLY BECAUSE HE IS ALSO ABLE AND FAIRLY OBJECTIVE OFFICIAL, AND SOUTH KOREANS MIGHT PREFER TO OPEN THEIR DIALOGUE IN A CAPITAL THAT REDUCED THE IMPLICATIONS OF AN AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR INITIATIVE.

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